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AUTHOR Gassmeyer, Julie
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ABSTRACT

This guide to behavioral change through group counseling presents an implementation effort at Rincon Junior High School. The guide is divided into the following parts: (1) "Group" History (1970-1976); (2) "Warm-Up Techniques and Bibliography; (3) Staff and Parental Cooperation and Resistance; (4) Evaluation Results Detailed (1975-1976), including seventh and eighth grade responses; and (5) Behavior Change in Progress (1976-1977). A sample counseling referral form and an outline of a behavioral approach to group work are also included. (Author/JLL)

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GROUPS AT RINCON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

OR

BEHAVIORAL DEFICITS, EXCESSES, AND ASSETS OF JUNIOR HIGH YOUNGSTERS: BEHAVIORAL CHANGE THROUGH GROUP COUNSELING (GUIDANCE)

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Submitted by:

Julie Gassmeyer,
Counselor/School Psychologist
Rincon Junior High School
2800 E. Hollingworth Street
West Covina, California 91792

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BEHAVIORAL DEFICITS, EXCESSES, AND ASSETS OF JUNIOR HIGH YOUNGSTERS: BEHAVIORAL CHANGE THROUGH GROUP COUNSELING (GUIDANCE)

"GROUP" HISTORY

1970-1971.....Groups were first started at Rincon during this school year. During the year, teachers led groups for 30 minutes a week during their "planning time." Criteria for membership in groups was: "disruptive behavior;" "non-verbal behavior;" "verbal behavior--MGM."

During this year, teachers had approximately an hour planning time each day and participating in group leadership once a week was something they were interested in doing. Two out of thirty teachers felt uncomfortable in the small group setting throughout the semester. Groups had 7 to 10 members. Two teachers (male) were uncomfortable in the leadership of non-verbal groups. Inservice meetings were held with all staff four times and with teams, as needed. Students and 90% of staff were positive about meeting in groups.

1971-1972

1972-1973.....The following year teachers lost their planning time and, therefore,could not participate in small group leadership. "Homeroom guidance" program was put into the schedule on a once a week basis and guidance-oriented activities continued in this setting. The counselor formed groups of all 8th graders during the Spring semester. These groups were for career exploration but retained some affective activities such as "fish bowl," "role play." There were 10-12 in each group; the youngsters signed up for groups so that peer groups were criteria for choice of groups. These groups met 10 times for approximately 45 minutes each week. Career information was given in form of filmstrips in addition to discussions. Guidance was provided for all 8th graders.

1973-1974.....Counselor, some youngsters, administration and some teaching staff perceived a need for more affective group discussions with some youngsters. During this school year, three groups were formed to meet needs of minority students who were having behavior problems, ie, fighting, name calling, on campus during lunch. One group was set for lunch time to relieve tensions on campus during that particular time. Two groups of Mexican-American youngsters and one group of Black Americans met together several times weekly until problems between these groups began to decrease; meetings were then set for once a week.

1974-1975.....During this school year, counseling groups increased to five. In addition to three "minority" groups, one group of behavior problemed "White Americans" was added. One group of highly verbal and success-oriented youngsters was added at the request of the ten youngsters. Counselor needs reinforcement, too!

1975-1976.....During this school year, fourteen counseling groups were formed and counselor-led. These groups had as their main purposes:

1. growth and development of skills which have already brought personal and school success to youngsters;

2. behavioral change of habits which cause hassles with school authorities and/or which interfere with educational achievement.

Group guidance was done primarily in homerooms twice a month. For the 8th graders, it consisted of career exploration. (Career Development Service--Careers Exploration System used by all 8th graders. A consumable booklet passed on to high school for use there.) 7th graders used the Deciding booklet, Ed. Testing Service, to improve their decision-making skills.

In October, 1975, twelve groups were formed as follows:

4 Ethnic Minority Groups: 2 of Mexican-American Girls;
2 of Black-American
(1 boys and 1 girls)

3 Verbal "In Classroom Control" groups: 2 girls, 1 boys

3 Non-verbal, Non-involved groups: 1 boys, 2 girls

1 Verbal "Out of Classroom Control" boys' groups

1 Poor Attendance group: mixed boys and girls.

Groups varied in size from 7 to 14. Groups met for 30 minutes a week at same time each week. Total number of group meetings was 24 for each group; average attendance of individuals was between 19 and 20 meetings.

Referral to groups was made by teachers for the non-verbal and verbal (out of classroom control) groups. Youngsters referred themselves for all other groups except attendance which was done by cum search using number of days absent in previous year as criteria (more than 30 days).

The verbal "out of classroom control" group was split into 2 groups after 7 meetings since the presenting problems and the maturity level of the boys were very different; the original group did not work well together. In April, a 14th group was formed comprised of 8 girls--verbal "out of classroom and campus control." The girls had ongoing problems, ie, truancies, smoking, drugs and defiance of

authority. Group was formed in an attempt to curb some of the disruptive behaviors which had been worsening throughout the year.

By April, 1976, 142 youngsters were assigned to counseling groups. Average weekly attendance was approximately 119.

Seventh and eighth graders were both in groups and usually seen by grade level. Boys and girls were seen separately, except for attendance group. This will be discussed in the evaluation section. Each group met once a week for 30 minutes; groups met in counselor's office most of the time. Occasionally, groups met outside in mall or grassy area and in local restaurants.

"WARM-UP" TECHNIQUES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

In all of the groups, "warm-up" techniques were used: introductions included family constellations, interest in and out of school, and other non threatening discussion topics. "Who Am I" discussions were encouraged by "person to take a trip...;" "what color am I most like today?" "Territoriality" was used in some groups; "finish the story" was also used.

"Hassles I've Had This Week" (at school, home, peers, etc.) were given by each group member. Suggestions for solutions to hassle were given by each group member. This was excellent technique in most groups. Leader could, in some instances, set up modifying behaviors for youngster based on members' suggestions.

At onset, non-verbal groups were unable to discuss even with highly directed activities. We read aloud from the McMillan Gateway Series: Who Am I?, Coping, A Family is a Way of Feeling, and after about four meetings, discussions began. Psychodrama's Magic Shop and role playing were most popular and effective with verbal groups.

(For source materials on group techniques see below)

Bates, Marilyn & Johnson, C.D., Eds., Therapeutic Techniques: Working Models For the Helping Professional. Fullerton: California Personnel & Guidance Assoc., 1973.

Bates, Marilyn & Clarence Johnson. Group Leadership: A Manual For Group Counseling Leaders. Denver: Love Publishing Co., 1972.

Gazda, George. Group Counseling: A Developmental Approach. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1973.

Greenberg, Ira, Ed., Psychodrama: Theory and Therapy. New York: Behavioral Publications, 1974.

Muro, James & Freeman, Stanley, Eds. Readings in Group Counseling. Scranton: International Textbook Co., 1968.

Rose, Sheldon. Treating Children in Groups. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973.

Shaw, Marvin. Group Dynamics: The Psychology of Small Group Behavior. New York: McGraw Hill. 1971.

STAFF AND PARENTAL COOPERATION AND RESISTANCE

Administrative support was obtained prior to starting the groups. Support was strong throughout the program. It wavered only once when a couple of teachers were most vocal in their request to not have youngsters taken out of "their" class. In 2 situations, teachers "won" and the youngster was removed from the group until the subject matter schedule changed. (Youngsters met same time each week, therefore missed the same class for 30 minutes for 10 weeks.)

Teachers have been most cooperative in supporting group work except as noted above. Teacher referrals have been excellent and youngsters referred for each type of group were particularly well fitted in that group.

Parents were not informed by letter of the groups and their purpose. Group meetings are treated as a part of the regular school program and it was not felt necessary to obtain permission from parents for participation.

There were 4 negative and 17 positive parental reactions to group participation. (I do not know how many youngsters told their parents that they were in a group.)

Negative reactions:
1) that the youngster would "spill the family beans"
2) that youngsters were involved in "sensitivity" groups a La Escalon
3) that group conflicted with religion.

Three of the four parents were pleasantly surprised that there was a definite purpose for the group, agreed with the purpose and supported their child's continued participation. One parent objected on religious grounds and saw absolutely no positive results in group for her son. He was removed from group but in such a way that his peers did not know "real" reason. He requested this "to save face".

Positive parental reactions:
1) that youngster seemed to like school better since group
2) that youngster seemed to be able to talk to them better since group
3) that school was "paying attention" to their youngster in a positive way
4) that youngster got to know other youngsters better.

EVALUATION RESULTS DETAILED (1975-1976)

In May, 1976, an evaluation of group participation was made by youngsters. 78% of youngsters who were involved in groups responded to the questionaire. (103 of 132) Thirty seven 7th graders and sixty six 8th graders responded (37 of 48; 66 of 84).

Although type of group was not noted on evaluation questionaire (anonymity was complete except for grade level), there were members from each of the 14 groups represented. Questionaire was read over with the entire group before it was completed and youngster's questions regarding word meaning were clarified by the Counselor. Some of the "forty-plus" year old wording of the counselor was interpreted by her for the youngsters. (i.e. item 8 "pushover", item 10 "profit from" were ambiguous). Item 10 was reworded to read "I think being in a group would help me." Youngsters were generally able to answer the "Yes-No" portion of the questionaire better than the items that required written opinions to open ended questions.

7th Grade Responses

_____Prefer meeting in groups with people from all cultures instead of being in a group with only ethnically similar youngsters. (Items 1,2)

_____Prefer counselor (group leader) direction in determining topics for discussion rather than "rapping" about whatever group wants to. (Items 3,4)

_____76% of youngsters responded they do not enjoy group "because it was an excuse to get out of class."
81% do not see counselor as a "pushover." (5% did; 12.5% gave no response or had "no basis for answer." (Items 5,8)

_____92% responded they would enjoy being in a group next year; 65% think being in a group would help them (Items 9,10)

_____62% responded they had changed "in some way" outside the group; 59% reported their "respect for human beings of all ethnic backgrounds" had increased. (Items 6,7)

_____None of the 7th graders reported that they had "never" respected the confidentiality of the group; 51% said they had "always" respected confidentiality; 27% responded "usually." (Item 12)

In response to the sentence "the things the group helped me with most are: the following were most frequent opinions.

1. "getting along with other people better"
2. "talking out more and a little louder"
3. "learning to talk freely"
4. "learned feelings for other people and how to respect them"
5. "learning how to talk about things"
6. "stay out of fights, arguments and making trouble"

The group did not help me because:

1. "tried to keep everybody talking"
2. "it was too short, let it be longer"
3. "some goofed around"

Changes for group suggested by 7th graders were:

1. "be there more than ½ hour so we can finish our discussion"
2. "talk about different things"
3. "go off campus more"
4. "have more mixed group; speak to all kids and have them join"
5. "have people who like what I like"

8th Grade Responses

_____Prefer meeting in groups with people from all cultures instead of being in a group with only ethnically similar youngsters. Not quite as strong feelings as 7th graders but significantly in favor of "mixed" groups. (Items 1,2)

_____47% responded they did want more counselor direction; 75% responded they wanted to be able to "rap" in group without much counselor direction. (Item 4)

_____65% of youngsters reported they did not enjoy group just because they "get out of class"; 75% did not see the counselor as a "pushover" (12% did; 15% gave no response or had "no basis for an answer." (Items 5,8)

_____79% of these 8th graders 'hope they can be in a group in high school." ((Item 11)

_____8th graders do not report any changes outside the group. (Item 6)

_____Confidentiality was not as respected by 8th graders: 38% reported "Always"respecting confidentiality; 38% reported "Usually." Respect for confidentiality "Sometimes" was noted by 20% of 8th graders. No youngster said they "Never" respected confidentiality. (Item 12)

8th graders report the following things that group helped most with:

1. "understanding myself better"
2. "understanding other people much better"
3. "learned how to settle problems; solve fights; stay out of trouble"
4. "talking about school--kept on talking about it so much till I liked it"
5. "getting to know how to solve problems-at home and school"
6. "learned to listen more"
7. "helped me talk more and not be shy"
8. "being more honest with people;" "not being scared to tell feelings"
9. "learning about careers"

Group did not help me because:

1. "Too short a time; not often enough"
2. "I didn't get to talk much"
3. "Didn't have competition solving problems"

Changes for group suggested by 8th graders:

1. "More time to talk"
2. "Go more places--field trips--go to lunch--go special places"
3. "Have more of my friends in group"
4. "Have students set goals, overcoming their problem"
5. "Have lessons in listening when we start"
6. "Have all one race so they won't be embarassed to talk about their problems"
7. "Have your own grade level"

1976-1977 BEHAVIOR CHANGE IN PROGRESS

September-
October.....(1) Distribute group referral slips to all staff (Appendix A).

(2) Office lists youngsters requesting group membership (95% eighth graders).

October.....(1) See all youngsters individually--self referred and staff referred.

(2) Discuss reasons they request group membership if self referred.

(3) Discuss reasons they were staff-referred.

(4) Explain purpose of group--to modify and/or enhance current behaviors; length of meetings; frequency of meetings; confidentiality.

November-
December.....(1) Warm-up techniques to develop group cohesiveness.

(2) "Hassles I've had this week"--develop group trust.

(3) Leader prompting group discussion of each member's need for behavior modification--elimination or enhancement.

January-
February.....(1) Completion of self analysis behavioral sheet. Define and discuss behavioral deficit, excess, asset (Appendix B).

(2) Group discussion of members' behavior change goal. Group suggestions for meeting week's goal.

(3) Counting the behavior by group members setting weekly goal (ie, behavioral excess--talking out of turn during class; count number of times teacher has to correct behavior).

(4) Staff evaluation of degree of student change (Appendix C).

March.....(1) Setting termination date (April 1st is set for last meeting).

(2) Plan luncheon outing with each group.

Currently meeting 16 groups, 46 seventh and 106 eighth graders.

Total number of youngsters served, 152.

Average attendance: 137; 1/2 hour weekly for approximately 26 weeks.

For an outline of a behavioral approach to group work, I've enclosed some salient points from Rose's Treating Children in Group (Appendix D).

Please write if you have comments or questions. Thank you for your attention and interest.

Mrs. Julie Gassmeyer, Counselor/School Psychologist
Rincon School
2800 E. Hollingworth Street
West Covina, California 91792

My thanks to teachers and administrators at Rincon for their support and encouragement of this work.

Julie Gassmeyer

1976-77 REFERRAL FOR GROUP GUIDANCE/GROUP COUNSELING

There will be the following "types" of youngsters seen in group guidance/group counseling this year.

1. Shy, Uninvolved, Non-verbal

2. Potential Behavior Problems-- *Campus Disrupters and Classroom Disrupters

   (Refer here those youngsters who tend to be "gang-oriented" and those youngsters' behavior is characterized by smoking, cutting and lack of respect for authority.)

3. Developmental Needs Group--("Problems" - verbal groups here)

*Some of these may be "ethnic" group but will try to have groups mixed as youngsters said they wanted on year end questionaire.

Appendix A

NAME _____

GROUP _____

DATE _____

BEHAVIORAL DEFICIT: _____

_____

_____

BEHAVIORAL EXCESS: _____

_____

_____

BEHAVIORAL ASSET: _____

_____

_____

CAREER I WOULD LIKE TO PURSUE AS OF TODAY: _____

_____

_____

TREATING CHILDREN IN GROUPS by: Sheldon Rose

Pre Group Phase

1. Interview individuals--kids see what group is like.

Initial Group Phase

1. Reinforcement for attendance, promptness.
2. Group cohesiveness emphasized.
3. Structure from leader.
4. Some behavioral assignments (leader given).

Middle Phase

1. Shift from leader to group--given behavioral assignments.
2. Role-playing to try out assignments and evaluate previous progress.

Terminal Phase

1. Increase attractiveness of alternative groups while fading out group counseling.
2. Decrease frequency of meeting.
3. Maintenance of behavior change checked with parents, teachers.

TYPES OF BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS WHICH CAN BE DEALT WITH IN SMALL GROUPS

Maladaptive Behaviors

Stealing, lying, peer fighting, verbal abuse, glue-sniffing, running away from home.

Adaptive Behaviors: Behavioral Deficits

Infrequent studying, lack of assertive responses, verbal skills, ie, asking questions in class; possessing only one recreational skill, absence of approach responses.

IMPROVING INSTRUCTIONAL CONTROL

Behavioral Problems

1. Dificulty following instructions
   a. the instructions may be inadequate, unclear, excessively demanding
   b. may have received little or no encouragement for conforming to instructions in the past.

Self-control or inadequate control of environment? Only can be worked with if client sees these as problems and is willing to work on them. (Problems of self-control, i.e., following instructions, smoking, sniffing glue, taking drugs, drinking, gambling, lying, stealing.)

Non-behavioral Problems

Environmental problems are conditions in youngster's immediate environment that should be changed but over which he has little control to change.

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

Specify!!

1. Youngster who hangs on adult's coattail.
   NOT
   "dependency"

2. John hits his sister.
   NOT
   "sibling rivalry"

3. Sam runs around in class.
   NOT
   "underdeveloped super ego structure or lack of self-esteem"

4. Sally frowns at the teacher most of the time.
   NOT
   "poor attitude"

5. Jane hands in assignments on time only 4 out of 20 times.
   NOT
   "uncooperative or poor study habits"

In describing the behavior don't use words like: able, willing, unwilling, cannot. Substitute number of times behavior observed, not "always," "never," "seldom," "frequently."

Reinforcers

If tangible used it is group given and involves leaving campus for lunch at conclusion of group or trip to counselor's home for swimming party.

Use reinforcers available in group--other group members. Counselor also becomes reinforcer. If desired behavior change occurs, teachers and parents become reinforcers.

Continuing to get out of class 1/2 hour a week may become best group reinforcer.

Appendix D
II